

Field Notes.

United States Department of Agriculture

FIELD DIARY

OF

Mr. Alex Wetmore.

(Official title.)

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James Wilson
Secretary of Agriculture.

1913

February 28, Friday

This morning there were fifteen or twenty grackles in the Department of Agriculture grounds, sitting in the tops of the trees and chattering. One has been here alone for no past week spending most of its time in a Hemlock just outside the office window. One bird that I saw on the ground this morning at closely Orange was certainly Quiscalus arenar as the back was distinctly Orange while the others were probably the other subspecies. Richmond (Chapman's Birds of N. A.) says that arenar is occasional in spring.

March 2, Sunday.

Went out this noon to Beaufort and spent most of the afternoon down along the eastern branch. There were many Crows (brachyrhynchos apparently), feeding along on the marshy areas left bare by the tide and others came flying in here during the afternoon before going to the root at Beaufort.

Saw many turkey buzzards today soaring around in the high wind.

A short eared Owl flew up from a marshy place and went alternately sailing and flapping off across the flats rising quite high in the air.

Saw Tree & Song Sparrows at the marshes and there were many Juncos feeding in yards in the town of Benning.

Three Red-winged Blackbirds flew over from the north.

It was cold and raw all day. dug around in old leaves for insects. Collected Diptera 1 Chironomid; ~~Collembola~~ 2 spec. Collembola 2 spec.

Coleoptera. Chrysomelidae Typhophorus canelus, Edonychis quercata.

1 Cerambycid and a species of Dytiscid all hibernating.

Saw one Herring gull.

March 3, Monday.

Purple grackles common in the department grounds today. Male pursuing the females and singing loudly in spite of cold raw wind.

March 9, Sunday.

This afternoon was out at Woodbridge and went with Kalmbach over to the crow roost.

Heard Cardinals and Song Sparrows singing clearly and

frogs were calling from damp places.

The crow roost was in a patch of timber mainly below the crest of a hill and the great number of crows present here was attested by their droppings and thousands of pellets. These are usually about an inch long and oblong oval in shape being closely firmly packed together. They are made up of undigested matter which is regurgitated.

From about a pint of pellets we examined we identified the following, bits of crayfish, small land and salt water shells.

gravel, coal, slag from an ash heap.

the jaw & scales of a fish, seeds of blackberry, poison ivy, 2 species of sunflower, Polygonum, Artemesia,

and Gum tree and Cerisus.

Not far a few crows came in but the greater number have now left for the north. They came flying over from the north west going on over to the Eastern branch first and then returning. Fifty or more sat in a tree on the crest of the hill and called and croaked.

Among them selves, others came flying in, descending swiftly in spiral flight at times dropping

Almost perpendicularly and giving a rattling call. A few juncos were with them but the greater part were C. b. brachyrhynchos. I called them over once by imitation.

imitating them and they circled over us one even lighting in a tree for an instant.

plenty of birds in the
rounds. The Purple grackles
are the most numerous.

Very noisy and were flying about in all directions. Klembeck said that Sunday they were nestbuilding near Woodbridge.

near West Union, W. Virginia

15th Morning. Room in
ting worms. Heard
the Boo-oo last

of geese go over last night.
Many Red-winged Blackbirds
flying over in small flock to

numbers of Meadowlarks

Quite a few Crows. A White-rumped Shrike on a wire near Burton Kans. Two Sparrowhawks near Peabody.

West to Florence. There was a good deal of timber bordering the streams but beyond them a decrease could be noticed.

Rather a cloudy day in the morning.

showers during the day. The road went over through Leesburg crossing Goose Creek & other smaller streams. At Bluemont called Snicker'sville on the old maps we climbed up to the summit of Snicker's Gap at about 1500 ft above sea level following the Winchester-Washington Turnpike. From here we turned off and came out finally at the Bear's den overlooking the wide fertile valley of the Shenandoah with brief glimpses of the river below. To Western eyes this region seems well wooded and even in the cultivated valleys studded fields alternate with squares of trees. (See by and) No birds out of the ordinary

May 1, 1913

With McAtie long Bridge to Aqueduct Bridge on Virginia side. Out at 6:10 and back at nine. Clear, bright day after several cool ones.

Note many warblers in as they have apparently moved on north without others to take their places arriving so that this list comprises practically only summer residents.

Bluebird 2

Robin 1

Carolina Chickadee 1

Tufted Titmouse 1

Carolina Wren fairly common singing

Cedarbird - joined a small flock below Arlington.

Cardinal heard

Song Sparrow common

Goldfinch fairly common.

Meadowlark one seen in

Experiment station grounds

Fish Crow along marshes

Common Crow few

Bluejay tolerably common

Downy Woodpecker - one seen.

Turkey Vulture - few.

Night Heron - several. Saw flying and three seen wading along in marsh.

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May 4 Sunday 1913.

Stayed at Kolmbach's but at Woodbridge last night & this morning we & I got out early before six and went down cross country as far as the bridge at Benning's. Looked like rain early but cleared and was very warm. Our way took us through cultivated fields and small patches of forest. And then along the marshy ground near the Eastern Branch.

Chimney Swift - lot near houses.

Purple Grackle - common - young out of

nest & others calling loudly.

Mourning Dove - tolerably common.

Maryland Yellowthroat - very common.

White-eyed Vireo - common singing loudly.

Myrtle Warbler - fairly common. Only

immigrant Warbler noted.

Red-eyed Vireo fairly common.

House Wren - common.

Wood Thrush common.

Song Sparrow - common. Found nest

on ground in swamp containing

four fresh eggs.

White-throated Sparrow - common

singing.

Field Sparrow - common. one nest with

four fresh eggs on ground in

high field. female flushed

right under my foot & had

I put it down the eggs would
have been crushed. Very scarcely
covered from above.

Meadowlark fairly common.

Catbird common.

Cardinal - several - singing a little

Brown Thrasher - several.

Chewink common.

Robin - several

Barn Swallow - around one barn

& near yeast factory.

English Sparrow common.

Chipping Sparrow - fairly common.

Yellow Warbler common - nestbuilding.

Bluejay - several

Redstart - common

Ovenbird - common one singing from

top of tall tree.

American Coot common.

Flicker - several.

Indigo Bunting - several

? Wilson Thrush - not seen. heard singing
but could not find bird though heard
several times.

Kingbird common

Rough-winged Swallow. One Penn.

Spurred - others along Eastern Branch

at Benning's.

Carolina Wren - several.

American Goldfinch common.

Bobwhite - two.

Scarlet Tanager - heard singing &

two males seen fighting.

Yellow-breasted Chat several

? Downy Woodpecker heard not seen.

Indigo Bunting one seen.

Yellow-throated Vireo several heard & seen

Swamp Sparrow - common in marshes

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher - several.

Carolina Chickadee several

Yellow-billed Cuckoo - one first record

Black-billed

? Louisiana Water Thrush heard singing

Parmla Warbler several

Song-billed Marsh Wren common

Rust-winged Blackbird few.

Bobolink. first of spring. half a dozen.

Fish Crow several

Rusty Blackbird. Seen seen & identified

unquestionably. latest record known to me

? Spotted Sandpiper heard

Cliff Swallow. one. first record

? Solitary Sandpiper heard.

? Crested Flycatcher several heard.

Red-headed Woodpecker several. nest

seen with female apparently

incubating.

Turkey Buzzard

Wood Pewee first record

White-breasted Nuthatch 2

May 8, Thursday

But at five thirty this A.M. with McAtee from Aqueduct bridge to Chevy Chase along the Potomac. Cloudy & cool and too much wind to see many birds.

Turkey Buzzard - common.

Robin one.

Song Sparrow common.

Catherdal common

Chewink common

Wood Thrush common

Fish Crow several

White-eyed Vireo two.

Ornithocelus common singing

Field Sparrow several.

Redstart common.

Kentucky Warbler one.

Red-eyed Vireo common

Carolina Chickadee. one surprising

feathers after bath at edge of river.

Black & White Warbler. one seen.

rough-winged Swallow - several around

old quarks.

Scarlet Tanager several.

Worm-eating Warbler. one seen. in some low bushes a quiet active little bird with a sharp chipping note was shy, hard to approach. On low

ground near river.

Maryland Yellowthroat. several

Yellow-throated Vireo two.

Acadian Flycatcher - 3 Empidonax
seen identified as this species
had sharp explosion note.

Dusky Bunting one adult male.

Parula Warbler several

House Wren several

White-throated Sparrow several.

Chipping Sparrow one

? Chat one heard.

~~seen~~ ^{seen} June 22, Sunday, (continued)
was noticed at all. Bewick's
Wrens are said to occur here but
I could not find any though
House Wrens were common and
I thought heard young out of the
nest.

Hooded Warblers were common
in the second growth on the
hillsides and I heard the
males singing often. They
scolded me sharply at
times with a loud chip
as though I was near their
nests. The males work
quite rapidly through the under-
growth singing and flying
a hundred feet or more at
a stretch so that it is difficult
to follow them. Occasionally they
go into the lower limbs of
the trees to sing.

The only bird that I collected
was a male Cowbird and they
were fairly common.
Red-eyed Vireos were common and
saw one nest.

Saw a young Dusky Bunting
out of the nest and heard
the males calling.
Hairy Woodpecker was
seen.

Acadian Flycatcher - 3 Empidonax
seen identified as this species

June 29, Sunday.
Woke out this morning to four
with sun and spent the day on
a long wooded hill back of huma
Park. Toward the west (young)
an old abandoned farm with
an old orchard. It was hot
but with a cool breeze. no
water here except in a spring
near huma Park.

Birds were fairly common up
here the Red-eyed Vireo of
course being the most abundant
species. I'm making up singing
all about and collected
one. There were several
nesting pairs above when we
ate lunch but none were
seen.

Scared a few Scarlet Tanagers
singing and shot one male
from the top of a tree a
very deep plumaged bird. On
that I took the first of many
scar difficult from had a
few red feathers in the wing
Scouts.

Carolina Chickadee were
common and were travelling
in small family parties.
Also saw one party of
Sufred Titmice.

Saw a Kingbird with what
was a apparently a
large bug which it beat
on a limb several times
before managing to swallow
it.

The brood of young Field
Sparrows in juvenal plumage
were seen.

Took a Whit-eyed Vireo
from a clump of Stripes
where it was coloring very
vigorously. It was a small
in rather worn plumage.

Took two box turtles *Terra-*
pene carolina that I thought
were different species but it
turned out that they merely
showed the extremes of in-
dividual variation. One was
the ordinary brownish colored
one with prominent yellow
markings and grayish olive
eyes with irregular stripes; the
other the other, a simple blackish
brown ground color blackish
shaded with yellow on plastron
carapace profusely spotted with
a dull marlcolored yellow. The
pul, which showed plainly marked
longitudinally with this yellow
with roundish spots in the plates

in the plates surrounding it. These markings tend to become elongate with smaller surrounding spots in the lateral plates ~~and~~ toward the ventral edge and posteriorly become confluent forming irregular L's and crosses. Its reddish brown & nearly round. At a casual glance the shell seemed profusely spotted. This was a female with eggs ready for the shell. Stomach contained fragments of snails, seeds of Rubus sp. probably dewberry and butts, Orthopteron & Diptera remains, vegetable rubbish, bits of hair, grass & gravel.

These two animals I showed diverse dispositions. One the first described was too fat to get into its shell entirely and soon overcame all fear but the other remained shut in all the while & when released ~~scuttled~~ on a floor merely crawled into a corner while its companion investigated every nook & corner.

Rhus glabra was in bloom and attracted many insects. Photinus sp. especially common.

July 20, Sunday.

Out this morning before five and went out to Georgetown alone. Walked across the bridge to Rosslyn and then followed up the river below Cherrydale. Very hot & close with fog along the river at first.

About the bridge in Georgetown were considerable numbers of Barn Swallows mostly young birds.

While waiting for the car at the treasury when I transposed several fish. Crows flew ~~up~~ over and several small parties of Purple Grackles flying out to feed somewhere.

Looked along the river for worm-eating Warblers but only saw one and failed to get it. It was an adult and was evidently feeding young out of the nest. Her they seem to frequent thick growths of bushes near the river usually where a small stream comes out of a gully.

Saw two Brooks of Kentucky Warblers out of the nest and shot two making one into a skin and the other into a skeleton. They show very little of the black about the head that the adults have.

These birds had the wings and tail well grown and were caring for themselves as they were fly-catching vigorously. One came up from some ferns on an open hillside and accosted me vigorously and then dropped back to cover again.

Saw a female Prairie Warbler finding a young one which I called ~~it~~ with soft notes and collected this bird. Found it in very good shape. Did not hear the male singing at all.

Saw a family party of *Dendroica* vigorous nesting ~~mainly~~ through the pines. The young were patches of young birds just getting full plumage. The male singing his trilling song a little.

Saw a Yellow-billed Cuckoo working through the trees and finally collected it.

Heard another call & saw one flying.

A ~~Scarlet~~ Tanager came into a choke cherry tree and ate several cherries. Was followed by a Chat and a Catbird.

An Indigo Bunting male ate several *Chalimus* (*ep dorae*) in the branches of a locust.

Other birds seen:

Carolina Chickadee several

Tufted Titmouse several

White-breasted Nuthatch 2

Carolina Wren 2

Cardinal ? few

Song Sparrow few

Field Sparrow feeding young.

Goldfinch few

Common Crow

Turkey Vulture.

Bobwhite heard.

Killdeer heard calling

Chewink young out of nest.

Purple Martin two.

Black & White Warbler one.

Chimney Swift several

Maryland Yellowthroat common.

Redstart one

Wood Thrush few

White-eyed Vireo scolding singing

Kingbird one.

Hooded Warbler singing

Hummingbird female seen.

Acadian Flycatcher several calling.

Wood Pewee several.

On the evening at Woodbridge saw Bonaparte's Cedarbark at Kahnbachs.

And at Mount Rainier several Red-headed Woodpecker.

At Duxbury about thirty Grackles flew over to the Donaghys in a flock of 500. Must be a roost out there somewhere.

July 27, Sunday 1913.

Rather close and oppressive in town today and hot everywhere. Went out on Four-mile Run and spent the day. There are a good many signs of fall in the air now. The grass is getting brown and dry and many localities and some of the trees show the effect of the weather.

The locusts are entirely brown now from the ravages of the Chrysomelid Chalepus dorsalis and are losing many of their leaves. They show up everywhere about Washington as brown patches on the hillsides. Apparently this does not hurt the trees however as these outbreaks come periodically.

There is considerable activity among the birds now and many young are about.

A small band of Carolina Chickadees was encountered twice working quickly with soft notes through the tops of the trees. They examined every crevice in the limbs even crawling into curled up rolls of bark and called continually.

I watched them carefully for warbles but the only one accompanying them was a single Minotilla varia.

Two Humbirds were seen on a brushy side hill. They flew up from the ground in low places. They have stopped singing within the last ten days.

Two Flickers were flushed from the ground among some pines

and flew from tree to tree ahead of me. Later they were encountered on top of the hill among some oaks.

Maryland Yellowthroats were common and were pushing young out of the nest. They scolded me sharply whenever I intruded in their haunts.

A White-eyed Vireo gave a rendition of his usual song and was found hunting actively through some bushes. One or two notes resembled those of the English Sparrow.

Red-eyed Vireos were common but were not singing a great deal.

They are moving more about the head.

An Orchard Oriole came into a tree near the old orchard and began scolding and hopping around energetically. I collected it and found that it was an immature bird but old enough to make a good skeleton.

Another was seen near Vienna.

Highlands working through some
lowest trees, calling and chattering.
Finally it flew starting over my
head but swerving to one side
when it recognized me. They are
of very local distribution but
being found mainly in cleared
country around Cabin John Md. and
above there.

The Field Sparrows nest that I
found two weeks ago was empty
(the young having evidently just
left it) so the eggs must have
been incubated more than a
thought. Farther down the
hill as I entered a little
spring another pair appeared
holding food in their bills and
I sat down at once to see if
I could look the nest. They
chipped at me sharply and
hopped about but all thought
I waited an hour still there
was nothing coming. For a time
I thought they might be
feeding the young of the first
brood as they were about
and seemed a little to be fed
but the adult ~~had at them~~ that
I took to be the female paid no
attention to them beyond keeping
away from them or once when
one was in the way she
flew at it striking it with

her feet & wings. Finally I noticed
that the adults visited all
the bushes in the clearing
but one and going up there
found the nest about three
feet from the ground. It contained
four young ready to leave and
as the nest was touched
they flew out going in four
different directions, flitting and
running through the grass. The
adults made a great demonstration
only once coming near and
that when the young first came
out. There were Scaphates and
banded Nos 8556-78. Later I
found another nest in a bush
containing three eggs that were
apparently fresh. Some of the
birds are still in song and
I saw many of the striped
young in first plumage.
Sighted Titmouse - Meadow.
Cardinal few.
Song Sparrow few.
Goldfinch common.
Fish Crow several
Common Crow
Bluejay two imitating Butes lineatus
Downy Woodpecker two.
Turkey Vulture in sight all the while.
Bobwhite heard whistling occasionally.
Simple Grackle few.
Morning Dove two
Chewink common still singing.

Purple Martin - several high in air.
Brown Thrasher - two in ragged plumage.
Bough-winged Swallow - one
Chimney Swift - common.
House Wren - one.
Yellow Warbler one
Catbird - common.
Kingbird - common.
Chat - several
Scarlet Tanager - has almost ceased singing
Indigo Bunting - few.
Wood Pewee - common one later
Acadian Fly catcher two
Yellow-billed Cuckoo several.

July 30, Wednesday.
The greater part of the Purple Grackles in the belt of agricultural grounds had their young out of the nest by the last of May and by the twentieth of June were mainly gone. A few however remained coming to drink daily at the watering tank below my window. July 28 a female brought two young just out of the nest to drink so that the lingering birds must have been those whose early brood was destroyed in some way and who though they still persisted in an attempt to rear a family. Through the

members of the first brood were ~~so~~ the young so early there was no attempt under normal conditions to rear a second brood.

The birds had their nests in small pines throughout the grounds and may numbered at least thirty five pairs and probably sixty. The Fish Crows undoubtedly reported a few of the nests though they were vigorously assailed whenever they appeared and were pursued with angry chucks. The birds come daily to drink and bathe in the watering tank out here and it is amusing to watch them. They usually stand on the pipe when the water bubbles out and splash the water over themselves but this is rather unsatisfactory. A few of the braver ones jump in going clear under and then climb out again repeating this performance several times, sometimes fluttering along in the water for a couple of feet or more.

They drink a great deal of water and often pick up bits of bread etc. and fly up to soak them in the water before eating them.

July 31, Thursday.

Yesterday there came a severe gale about three in the afternoon wrenching hundreds of trees along the streets and in the parks, blowing in windows and even demolishing houses. Heavy rain accompanied it and for a few minutes hail stones fell.

This storm was quite destructive to the sparrows here in the city. I saw a dozen or fifteen *Passer domesticus* dead along the front of the museum without searching for them and undoubtedly several hundred were killed here. One that I saw was an adult male and the rest were young ones.

August 2, Saturday.

This afternoon wind out on four-mile Run. Birds were common today and were quite restless.

Saw a number of Cedar Waxwings passing over but none stopped.

A Red-eyed Vireo scolding at something drew a flock of Yellow-throats, *Chortades* and all the other denizens

of the woods but I could not find what troubled it.

A full Sparrow nest that

a week ago contained 3 eggs

was empty. The wind had

evidently blown it over and

destroyed the eggs.

August 3, Sunday.

Went down to Chesapeake

Beach today.

Saw 3 Common Terns flying

along out from shore.

Brish Gulls were common

along the beach and young

were following the adults &

begging for food. As the refuse

from a passing steamer came

drifting in they flew out &

seized it with their bills

and flew back to shore with

it.

Spotted Sandpipers seen along

beach.

August 10, Sunday.

This morning went down to

Hunting Creek in Virginia just

above Mount Vernon.

There were stretches of

swampy woods here with

hills intervening and along

the mouth of the creek

swampy growth of reeds and

July 31, Thursday.
Yesterday Thurs. came a

Sagittaria.

There were several Green Herons flying about & roosting in the trees and I shot one an immature bird.

Two Blue Ardea herodias were seen farther out also.

There was a large mixed flock of small birds in the trees working through the tops.

Many of them were Red-eyed Vireos. Some of them still singing loudly. A good many were in ragged plumage about the head but others without doubt young in smooth fresh plumage.

The Carolina Chickadees were

fairly common too and called and scolded. All that I saw

were in very ragged plumage.

One White-eyed Vireo was

singing in the brush occasionally along the borders of the woods.

It was rather a dark locality for it here.

Two Red-billed Woodpeckers

were seen too a rare bird in

this vicinity.

Other birds notes:

Tufted Titmouse several.

Carolina Wren - singing

Migrant Shrike - one on a fence

below Alexandria.

Carolina

Song Sparrow

Meadowlark - about 50 in one field

below Alexandria.

Rich Crow - heard.

Common Crow - ..

Bluejay - four or five

Hairy Woodpecker - one - not common here.

Sparrow hawk - one below Alexandria

Turkey Vulture

Red-winged Blackbird one.

Pileated - two heard.

Flicker - one in dense woods.

Kingfisher one

Rough-winged Swallows over river.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher - 2 heard.

Chimney Swift several.

Maryland Yellowthroat - carrying food

to young apparently still in nest.

Cassin's Vireo - seen.

Parula Warbler - one heard singing

Kingbird

Great-crested Flycatcher - one heard.

Scarlet Tanager - two

Indigo Bunting

Wood Pewee - young and not

yellow-billed Cuckoo - one.

August 16, Saturday

Went out this afternoon to Blacksburg followed along the Eastern Branch for a distance and came back via Hyattsville.

There were very few birds along here thought it was good country for them. fewer than I have seen anywhere here yet. It was low and wet along the streams and inland oak woods as usual. A solitary sandpiper flew up from a pool right in the town of Blacksburg.

One young Wood Pewee in

first plumage was taken and preserved as a skin. Others were heard.

A young Empidonax ~~oreocoma~~ was taken also in juvenile plumage.

Red-eyed Vireo were the only common birds. Young were following their parents and teasing to be fed and one small party was surrounded working through the trees.

saw one Black and white Warbler also.

A dozen Buzzards had been feeding on a dead dog and then perched in some dead

limbs at the tops of oaks. As I passed they flew up heavily and began circling back and forth.

A single Cedar Waxwing was seen at the edge of a clearing in the dead top of an oak. This bird proved to be a laying female.

Rough-winged Barn & Tree Swallows came circling in in the evening.

Two Quatecatchers seen

August 17, Sunday

Today went out on Four-mile Run in Virginia again and did not return until evening. Birds were rather scarce here.

A half-formed cloud of vapor ~~that~~ came drifting over almost at the point of forming rain drops pinched Barn & Rough-winged Swallows which worked back and forth after insects a few ~~times~~ flying with them and one I shot. They were two were seen occasionally throughout the day and a single bird passed over several times but just.

An adult Purple Martin hopped about high in the

air followed by one unfortunate young bird. At intervals the dead bird fed it both joining together for an instant in the air, separating almost at once.

Scarlet Tanagers in juvenile plumage were fairly common in family parties in the oak woods. They were getting insects of various kinds from the dead bunches of leaves.

Field Sparrows were very common in the old orchard. At evening they gathered in small flocks in the apple trees to roost.

Bluebird - an old nest found in a hole in an apple tree.

Carolina Chickadee small flock. Two came over my head calling to me.

Tufted Titmouse - heard calling.

Cardinal few.

Goldfinch two

Brick Crow seen passing over to

Common Crow the south in small

parties at dusk.

Chivay, heard calling.

Downy Woodpecker heard.

Red-shouldered hawk calling & seen.

Turkey Vulture.

Bobwhite - two calling excitedly in

the brush.

Phoebe one bird seen along

a dry gully.

Thick-billed Gulls seen.

Mourning Dove one seen.

Chewink common.

Black & White Warbler one.

Redstart one.

Catbird

Red-eyed Vireo

Kingbird two.

Crested Flycatcher calling in evening

Chat one seen.

Indigo Bunting three.

Wood Pewee.

Box turtles seen copulating. Female was shut up in her shell and the male was turning her over with his head and crawling over her first on one side & then on the other, and crawling over her.





